SURAH OF AL-ALAQ

THE RESEARCH:
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AL-ALAQ

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THE REFERENCES

1. https://quran.com/al-alaq/info
2. https://quran.com/al-alaq

BACK

THE BACKGROUND

Adapted from Tafsir Ibn Ashur [1]

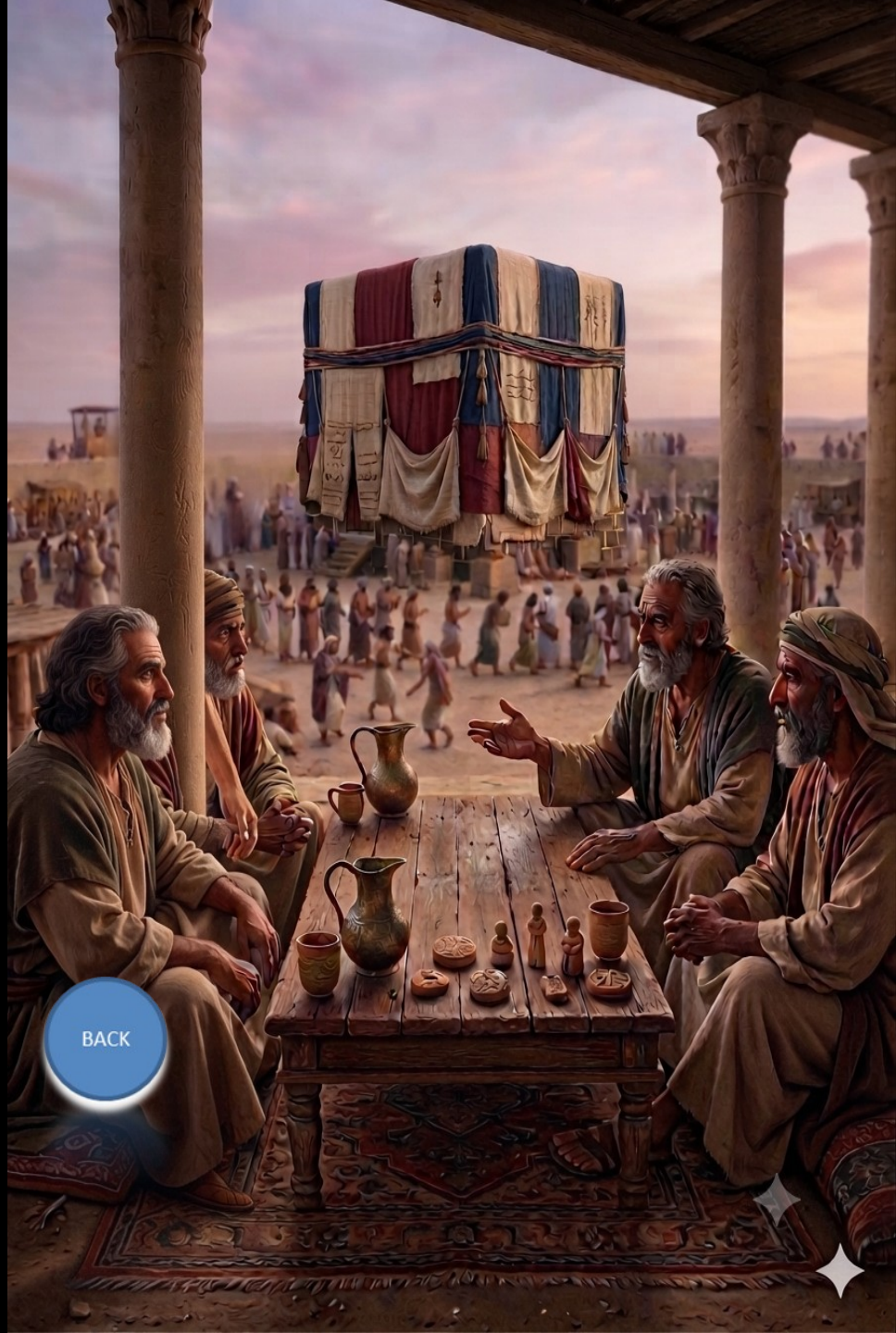
Themes and purpose:

- This Makkan surah is the first revealed. Its purpose is to command the Prophet (ﷺ) to read and convey the message, establishing the dignity of knowledge and the Pen. It affirms Allah as the sole Creator and warns the arrogant human who denies his Lord and attempts to prevent others from prayer and guidance.

BACK

Context of Revelation:

- Era: Makkan by consensus.
- Context: The first part was revealed to initiate the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission, instructing him to recite. Ayahs 6-19 were revealed later to address the arrogance of a specific disbeliever (likely Abū Jahl) who attempted to prevent the Prophet (ﷺ) from praying.
- Chronology: The first five ayahs were the very first revelation of the Quran, revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ) in the Cave of Ḥirā', in the month of Ramaḍān.



Name

The surah is known by several names: "Sūrat al-ʿAlaq" (The Clot) and "Sūrat Iqra’" (Read), "Sūrat Iqra’ bi-ismi Rabbika" (Read in the Name of Your Lord), as well as "Sūrat Iqra’ wa-al-ʿAlaq", all with reference to the opening word and/or the word ʿalaq in the second ayah. It has also been called "Sūrat al-Qalam" based on ayah 4, though this name is more predominantly used for Q 68 (Nūn).

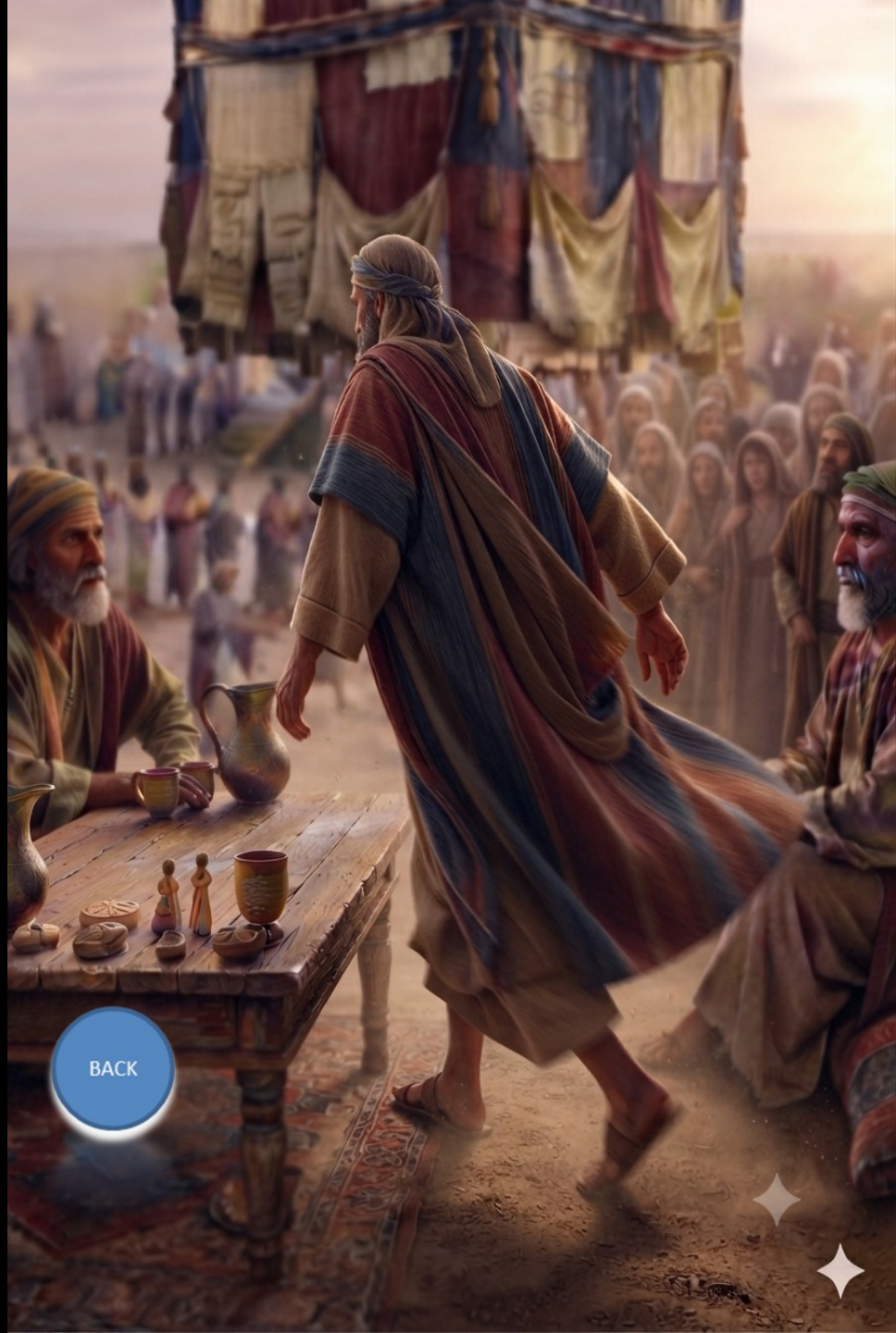
BACK

Surah Overview:

- The Command to Read: The central purpose is the divine instruction to Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) to recite and receive the Quran. [1]
- The Pen and Knowledge: Affirming the divine blessing and the dignity of the Pen and knowledge. [3-5]

BACK

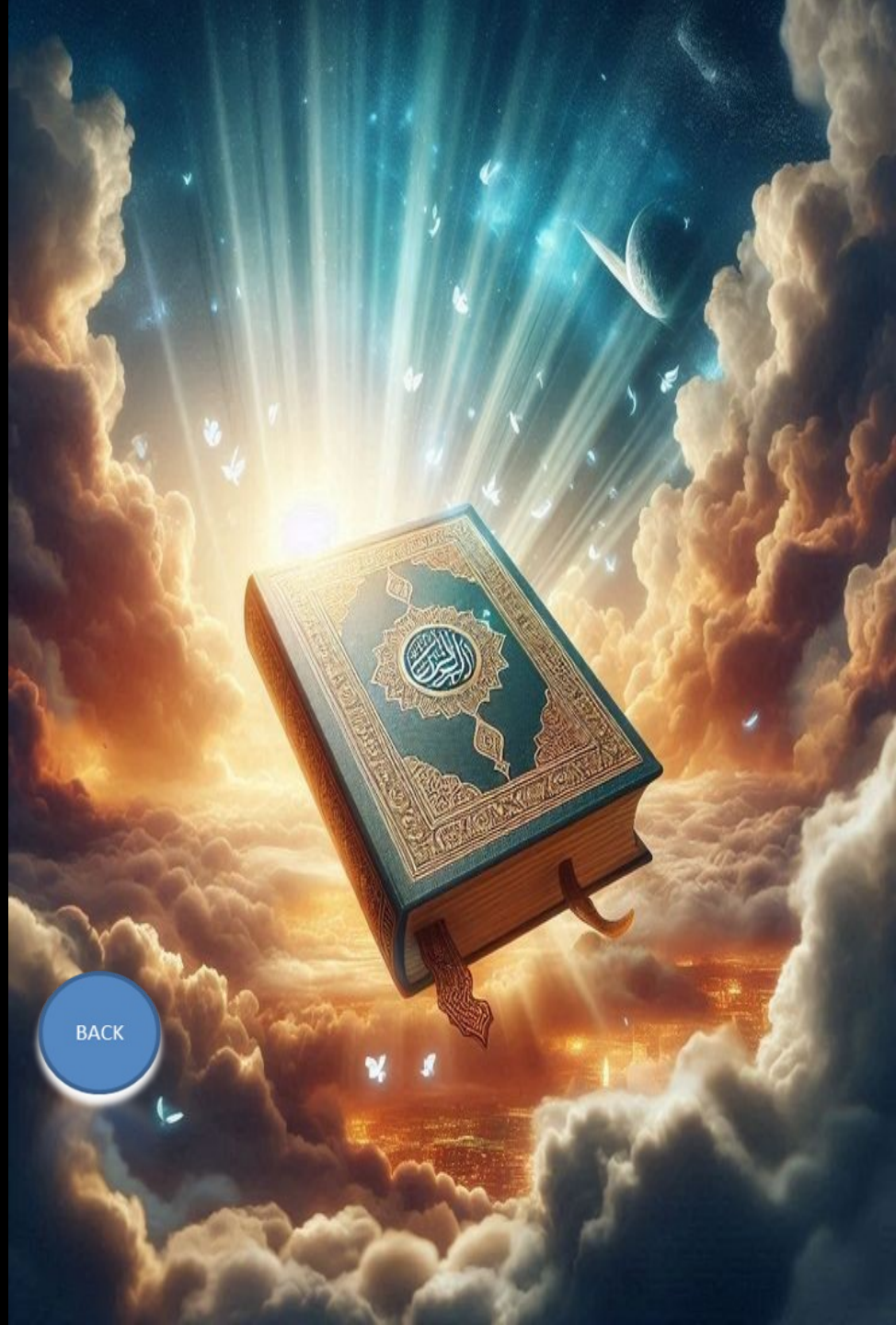
- Creation: Directing attention to the miracle of man’s creation from a clot as the foundation for contemplation. [2]
- Condemning Arrogance: Condemning the arrogant man who, despite his humble origin, considers himself self-sufficient and attempts to prevent others from prayer. [6-10]
- Warning to the Denier: Warning the one who prohibits prayer that Allah will “seize him by the forelock.” [15-18]
- Prophetic Steadfastness: Commanding the Prophet (ﷺ) to persist in his worship and draw near to Allah despite the enemy’s threats. [19]



THE AYAT IN DETAILS 2

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾

Read, O Prophet, in the Name of your Lord Who created—

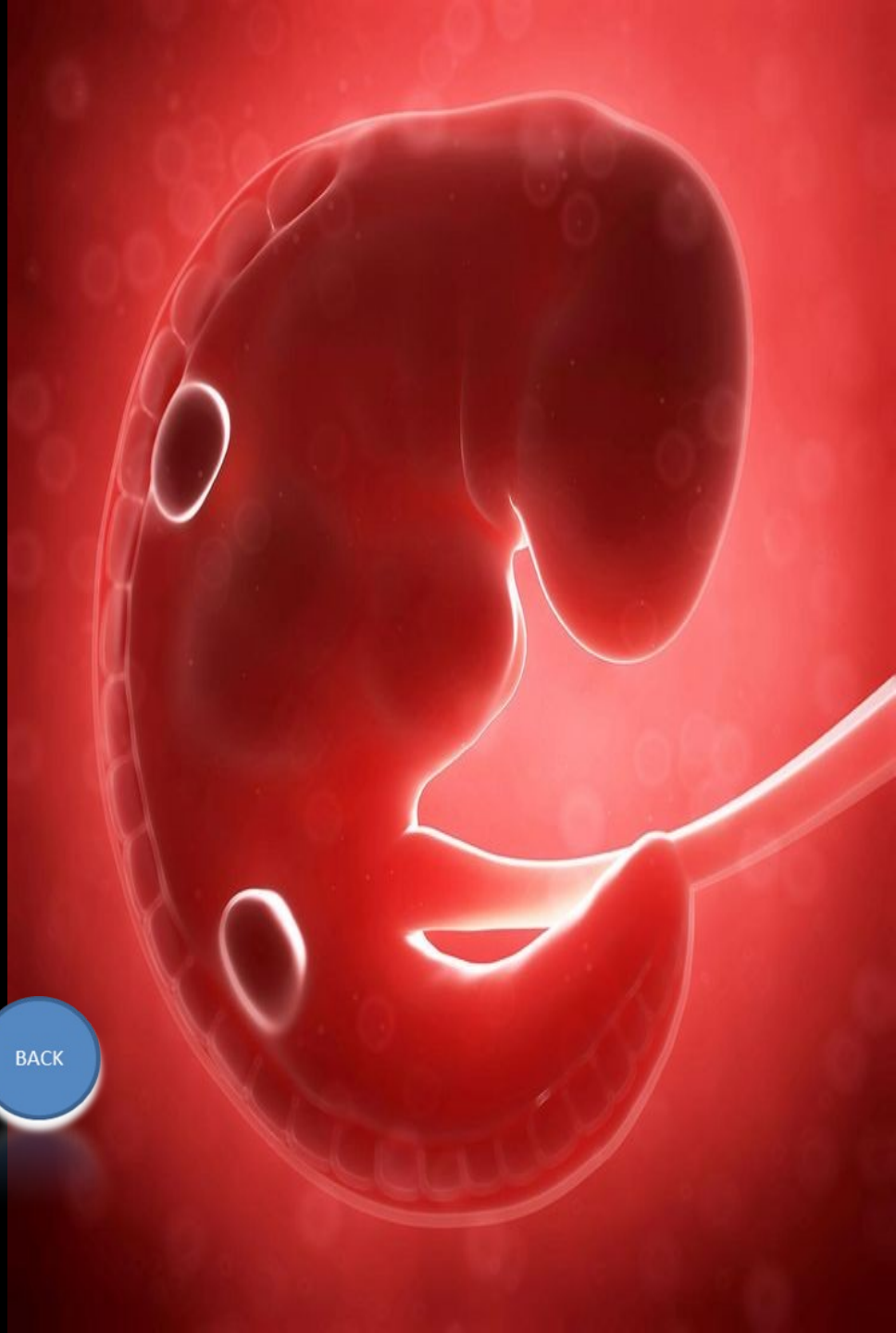


خَلَقَ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾

created humans from a clinging clot.1

Footnote - 1

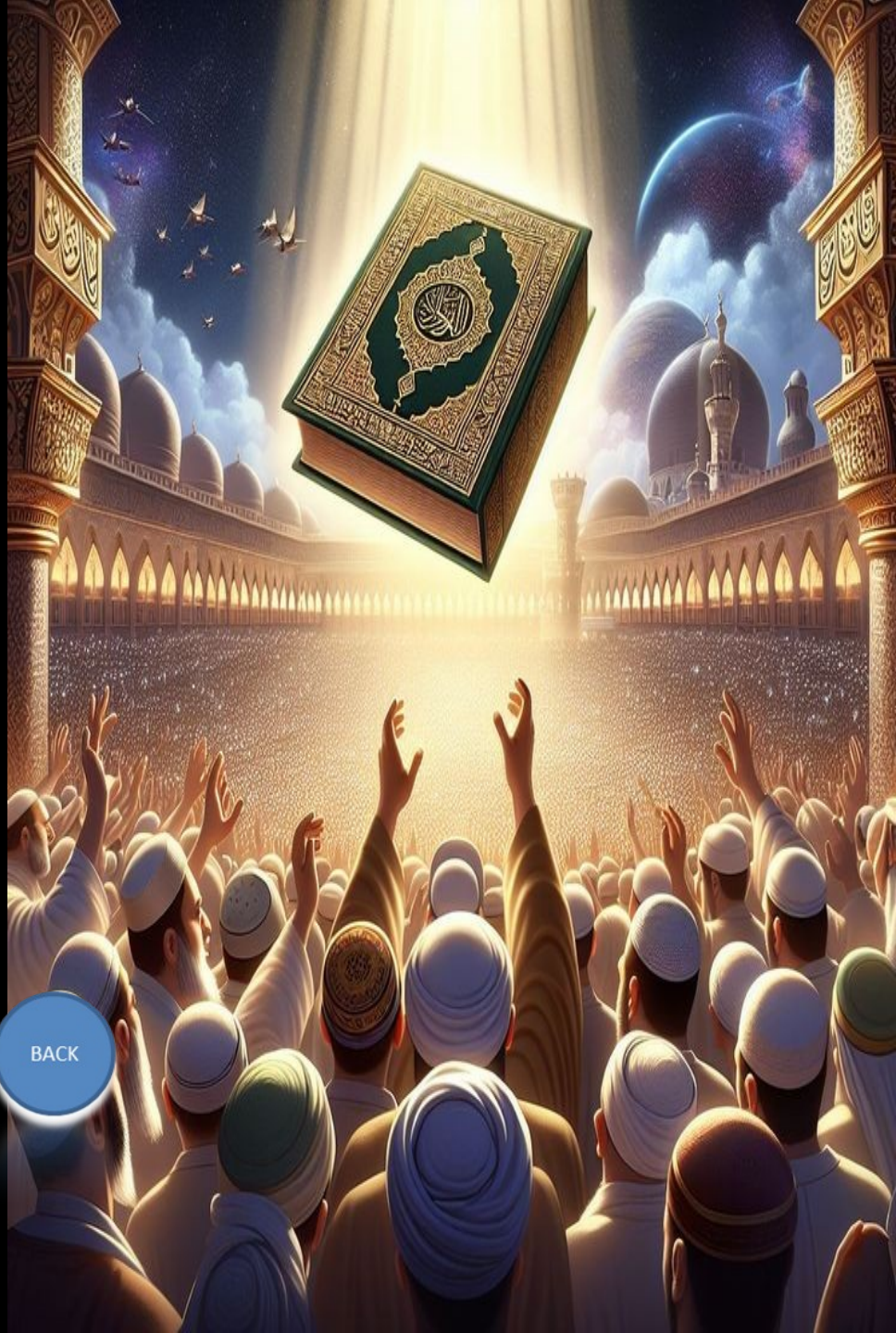
’Alaq, meaning the embryo resembles a leech.



BACK

ٱقۡرَأۡ بِٱسۡمِ رَبِّكَ ٱلَّذِي خَلَقَ ۝١ خَلَقَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ مِنۡ عَلَقٍ ۝٢ ٱقۡرَأۡ
وَرَبُّكَ ٱلۡأَكۡرَمُ ۝٣ ٱلَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِٱلۡقَلَمِ ۝٤ عَلَّمَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ

Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous,



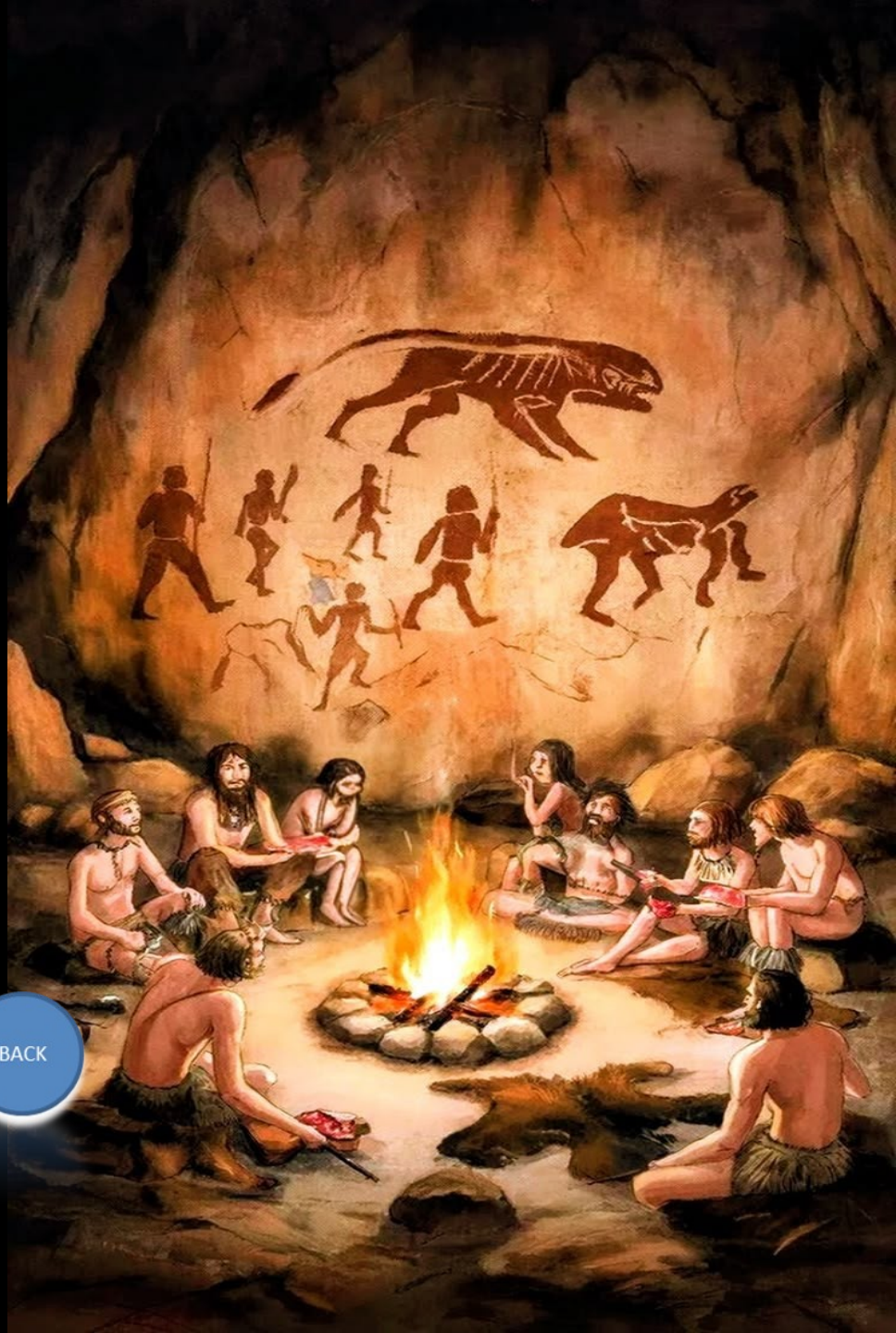
ٱلَّذِى عَلَّمَ بِٱلْقَلَمِ ﴿٤﴾

Who taught by the pen—

BACK

وَرَبُّكَ ٱلْأَكْرَمُ ۝٣ ٱلَّذِى عَلَّمَ بِٱلْقَلَمِ ۝٤ عَلَّمَ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ
مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ۝٥ كَلَّآ إِنَّ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ لَيَطْغَىٰٓ ۝٦ أَن رَّءَاهُ ٱسْتَغْنَىٰٓ

taught humanity what they knew not.1



BACK

Footnote - 1

Verses 1-5 are known to be the first ever revealed of the Quran. The Prophet (ﷺ) was retreating at a cave in the outskirts of Mecca when the angel Gabriel appeared to him, squeezing him tightly and ordering him to read. Since the Prophet (ﷺ) was unlettered, he responded, “I cannot read.” Ultimately, Gabriel taught him: “Read in the Name of your Lord …” Some scholars believe that this encounter is the fulfilment of Isaiah 29:12, which states, “Then the book will be given to the one who is illiterate, saying, ‘Read this.’ And he will say, ‘I cannot read.’”

كَلَّآ إِنَّ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ لَيَطْغَىٰٓ ٦

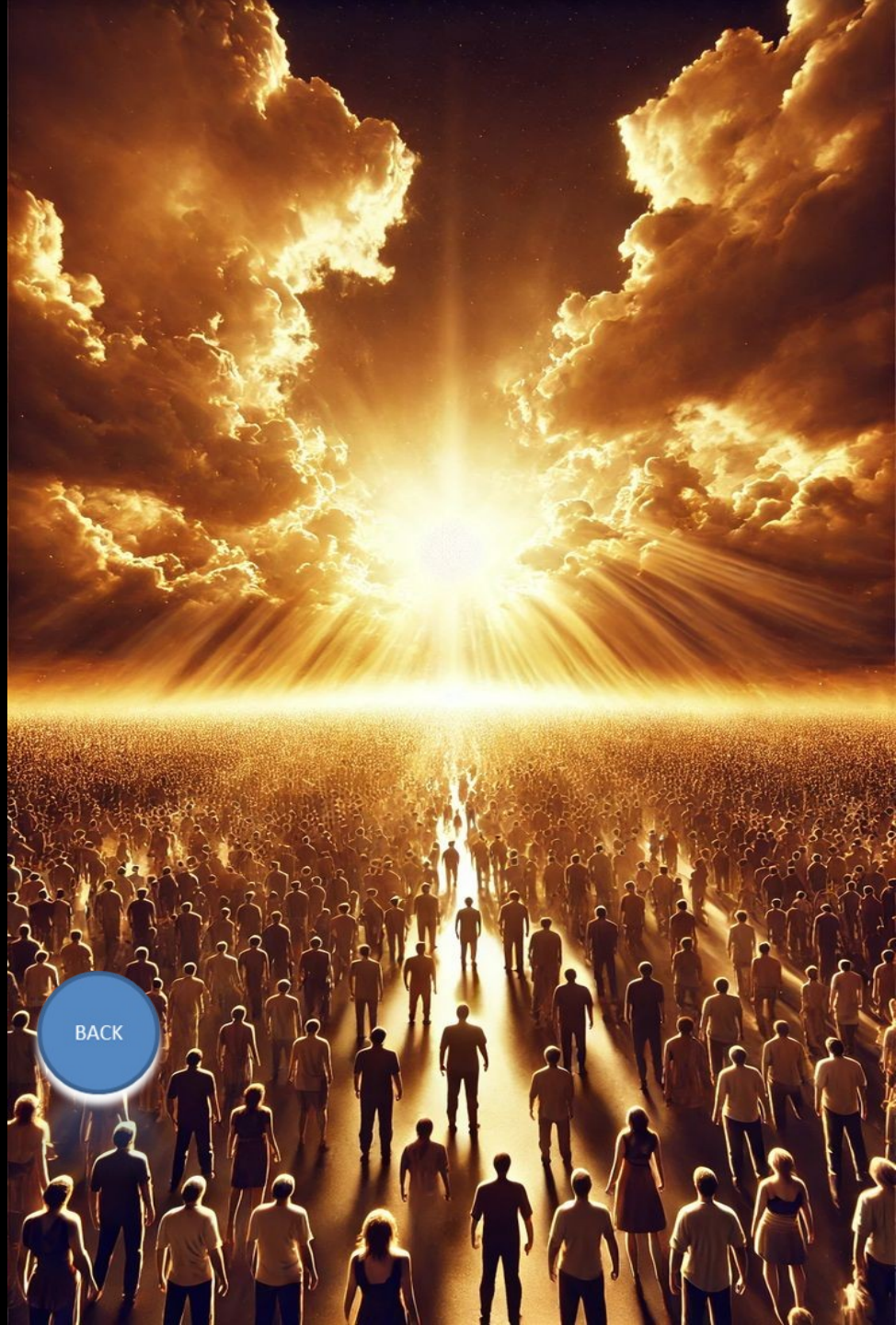
Most certainly,
one exceeds
all bounds

أَن رَّءَاهُ ٱسْتَغْنَىٰٓ

once they think they are self-sufficient.

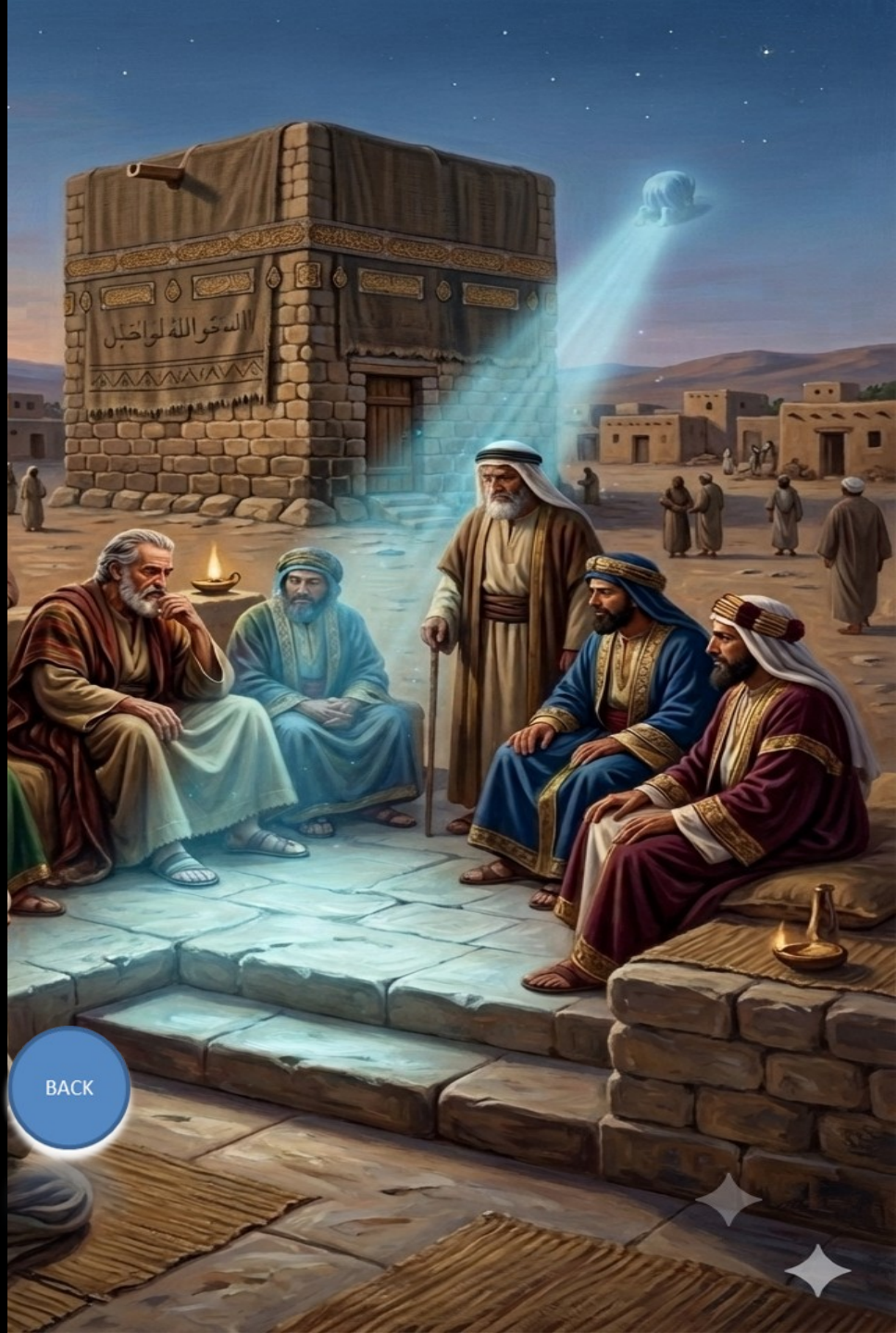
إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ ٱلرُّجۡعَىٰٓ ٨

But surely to your Lord is the return of all.



أَرَءَيْتَ ٱلَّذِى يَنْهَىٰ ٩

Have you seen the man who prevents

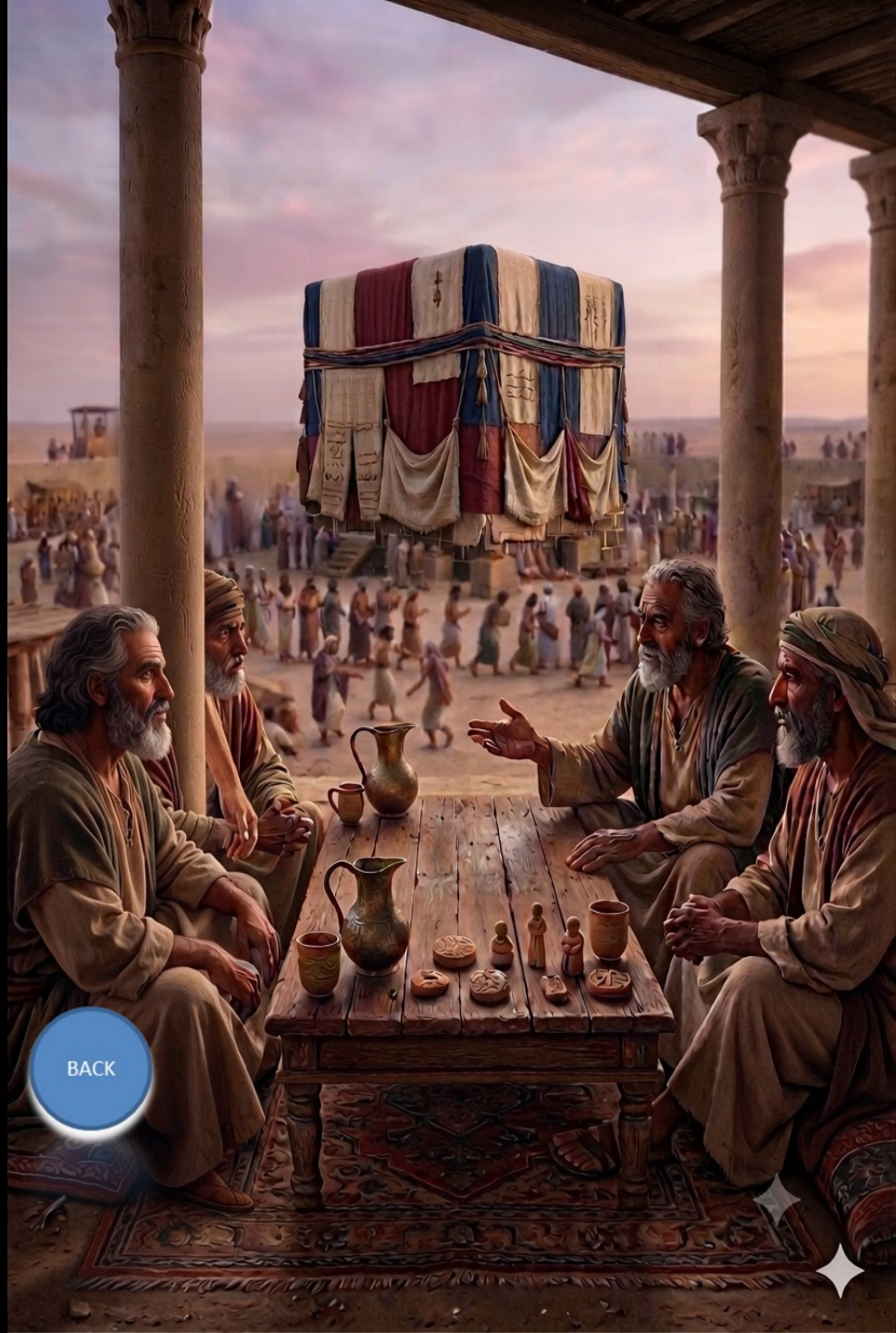


إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ ٱلرُّجْعَىٰٓ ﴿٨﴾ أَرَءَيْتَ ٱلَّذِى يَنْهَىٰ ﴿٩﴾ عَبْدًا
إِذَا صَلَّىٰٓ ﴿١٠﴾ أَرَءَيْتَ إِن كَانَ عَلَى ٱلْهُدَىٰٓ ﴿١١﴾ أَوْ أَمَرَ بِٱلتَّقْوَىٰٓ ﴿١٢﴾

a servant of Ours from praying?1

Footnote - 1

Abu Jahl was a staunch leader of the Meccan opposition to Islam. There are many authentic stories of his abuse of the Prophet ().



أَرَءَيْتَ إِن كَانَ عَلَى ٱلْهُدَىٰٓ ١١

What if this servant is rightly guided,

أَوۡ أَمَرَ بِٱلتَّقۡوَىٰٓ ١٢

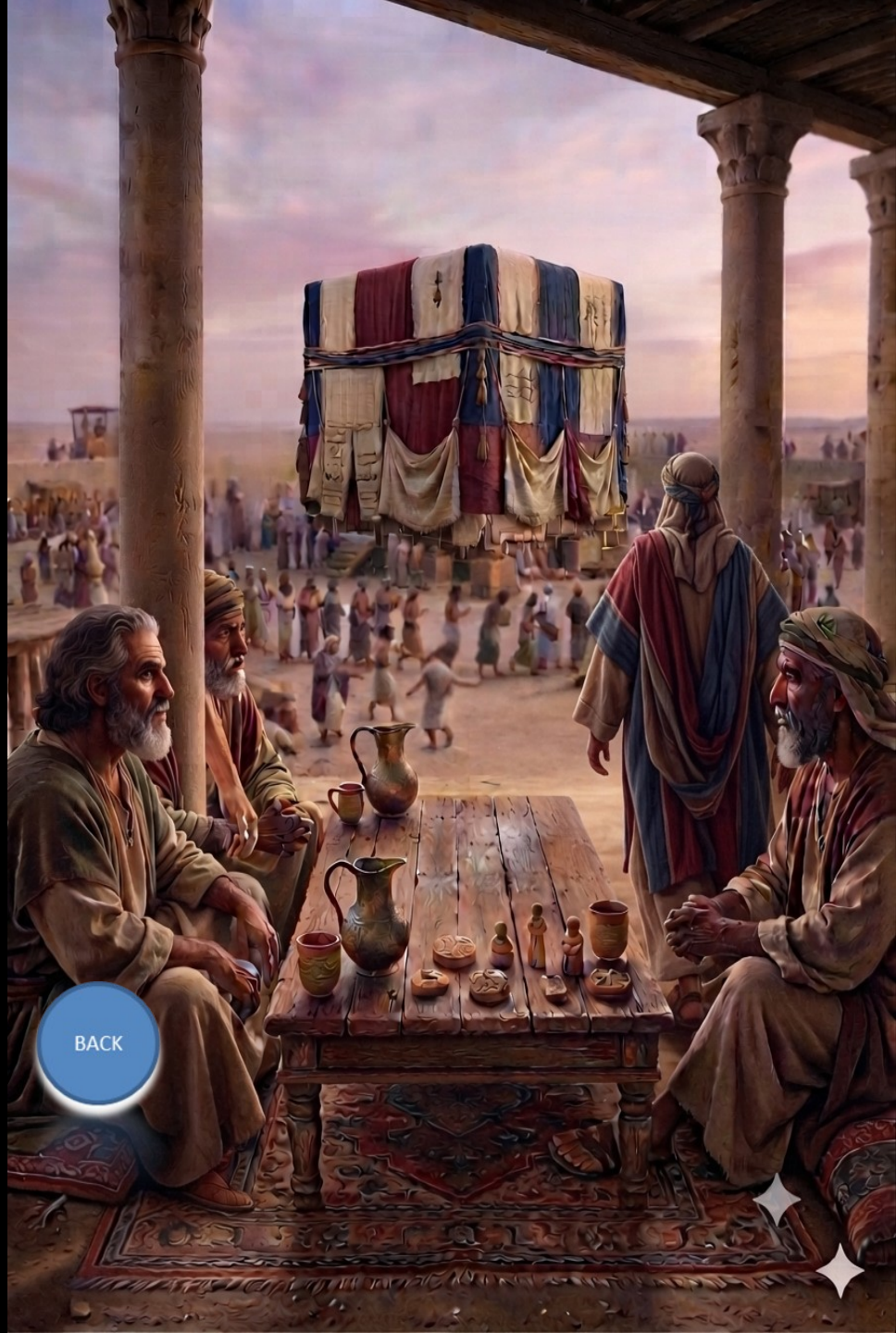
or encourages righteousness?

أَرَءَيْتَ إِن كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰٓ ﴿١٣﴾

What if that man persists in denial and turns away?

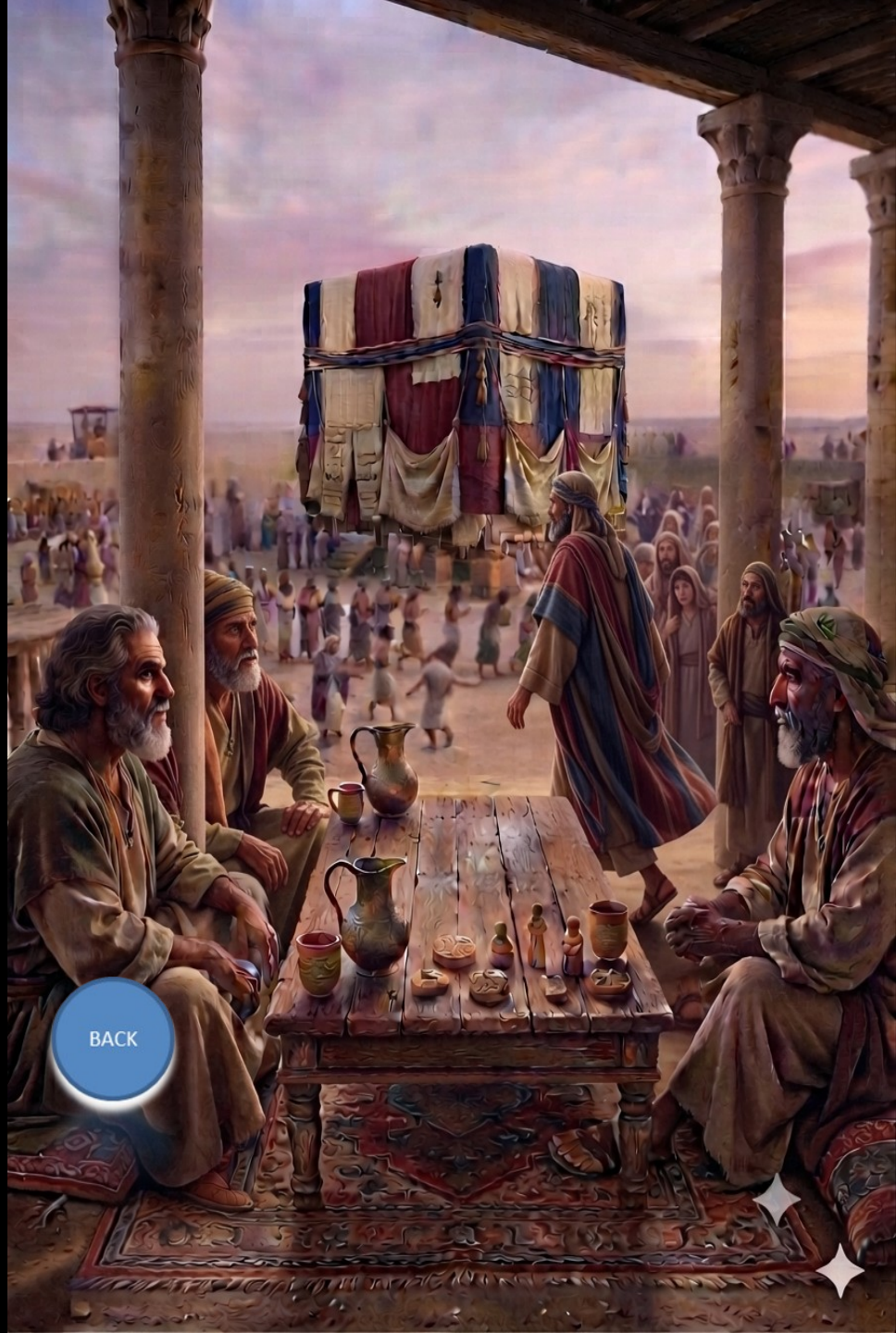
أَلَمْ يَعْلَم بِأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَرَىٰ ﴿١٤﴾

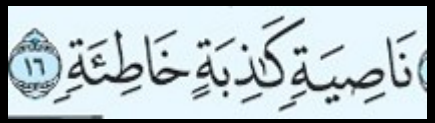
Does he not know that Allah sees all?



أَرَءَيْتَ إِن كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰٓ ﴿١٣﴾ أَلَمْ يَعْلَم بِأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَرَىٰ ﴿١٤﴾ كَلَّا لَئِن لَّمْ يَنتَهِ
لَنَسْفَعًۢا بِٱلنَّاصِيَةِ ﴿١٥﴾ نَاصِيَةٍ كَٰذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ ﴿١٦﴾ فَلْيَدْعُ نَادِيَهُۥ ﴿١٧﴾

But no! If he does not desist, We will certainly drag him by the forelock—

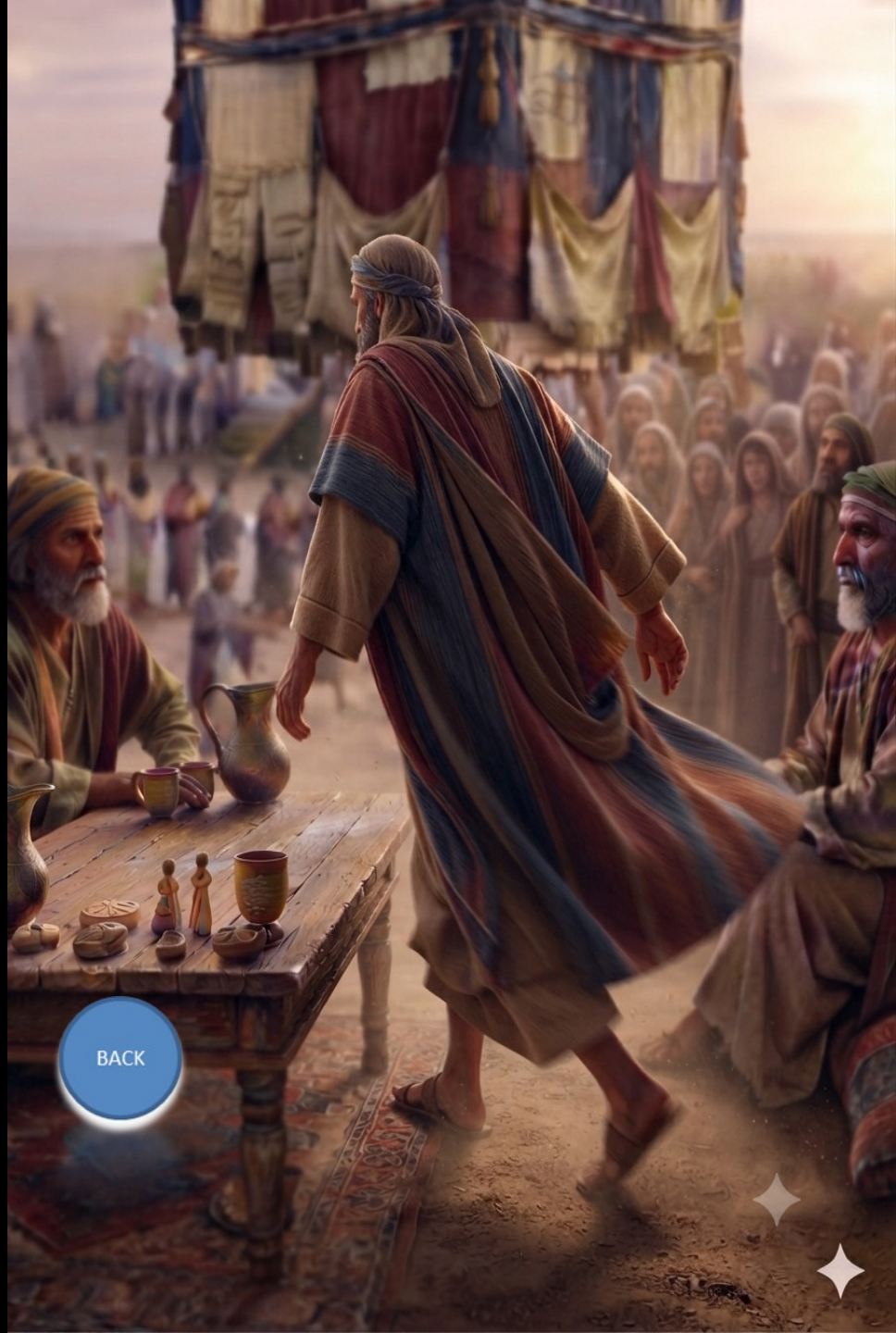




a lying, sinful forelock.[1]

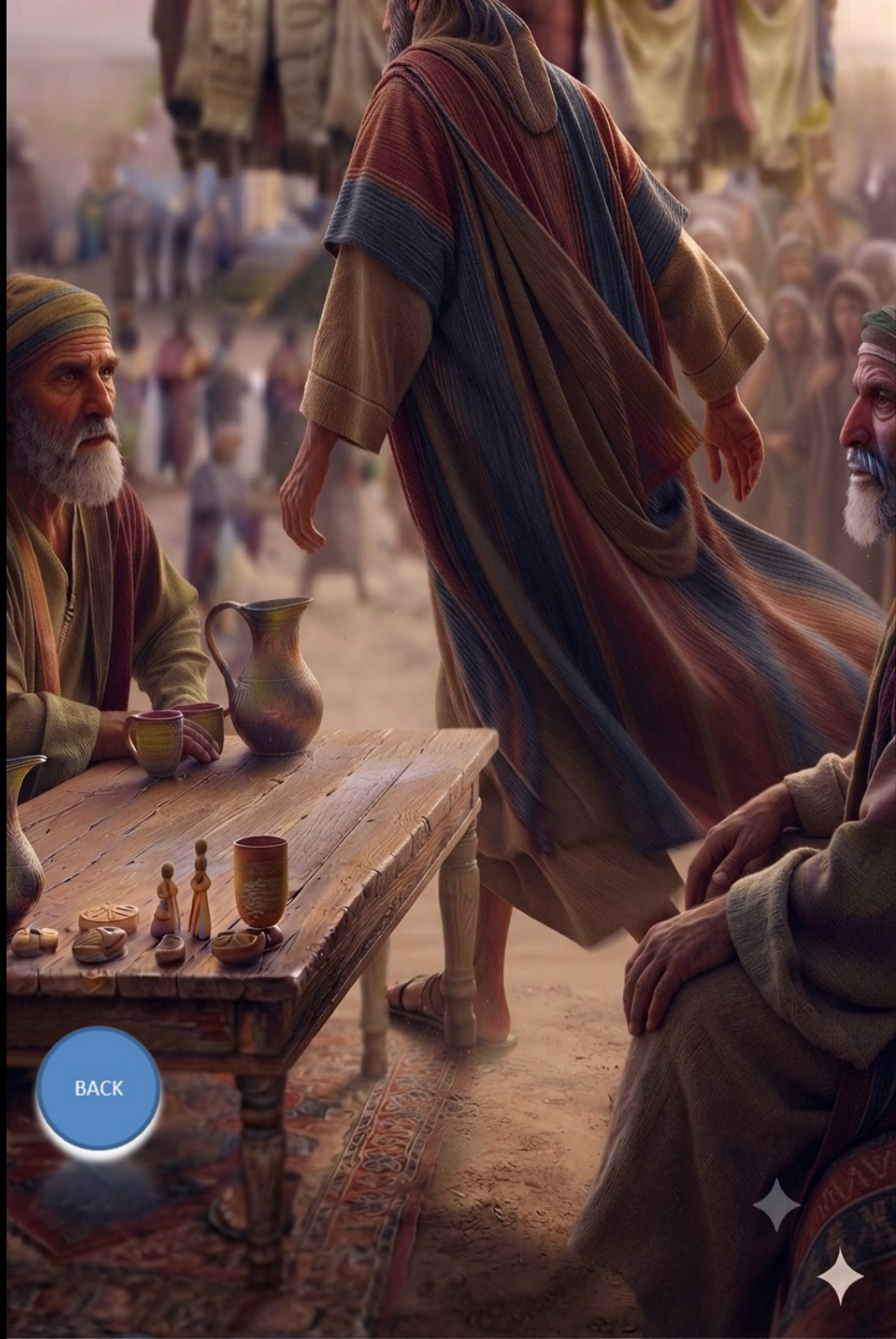
Footnote - 1

This refers to the frontal lobe of the brain, where reasoning is processed.



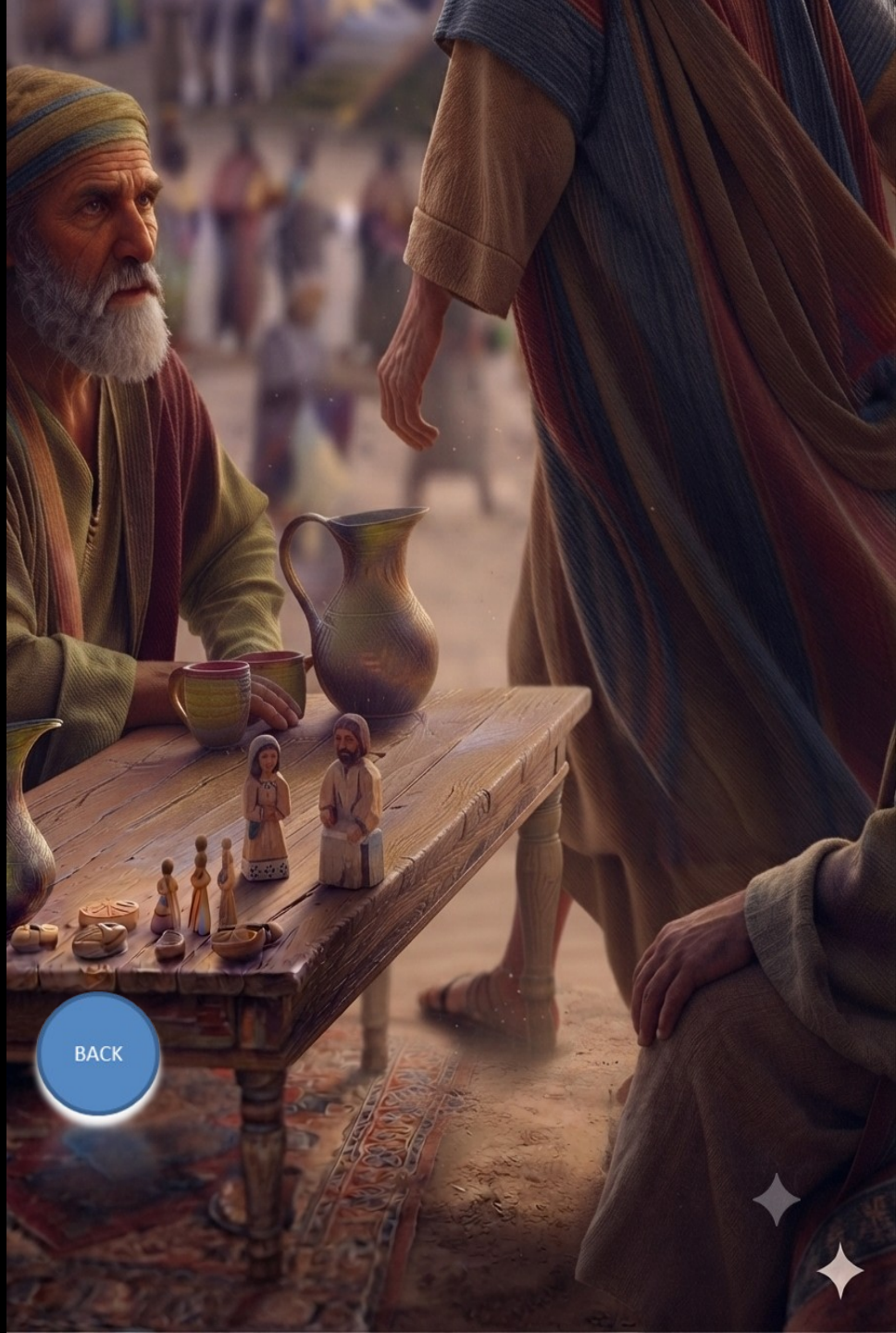
فَلْيَدْعُ نَادِيَهُۥ ﴿١٧﴾

So let him call his associates.



سَنَدْعُ ٱلزَّبَانِيَةَ ﴿١٨﴾

We will call the wardens of Hell.



كَلَّا لَا تُطِعْهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِب ۩ ١٩

Again, no! Never obey him ﷺ O Prophet ﷺ! Rather, ﷺ continue to ﷺ prostrate and draw near ﷺ to Allah ﷺ.

EXCERCISES

BACK

1. Remembering (Recall)

1) What are the first words revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in this surah?
2) In whose name are people commanded to read?
3) From what did Allah create الإنسان (man)?
4) What tool of learning is mentioned in the surah?
5) What did Allah teach mankind through the pen?
6) What does the surah say about man's attitude when he sees himself self-sufficient?
7) To whom is the final return?
8) Which person is criticized in the latter part of the surah?
9) What act of worship was he trying to prevent?
10) What command is given in the final verse?

2. Understanding (Comprehension)

1) Why does the surah begin with the command "Read"?
2) What does the mention of man's creation from a clinging clot teach us about human origins?
3) Why is the pen highlighted as a blessing from Allah?
4) What is the connection between knowledge and faith in this surah?
5) What does the phrase "Indeed, to your Lord is the return" remind people of?
6) Why does man sometimes become arrogant after gaining power or wealth?
7) How does the example of Abu Jahl illustrate the danger of pride?
8) What lesson does the final command "Prostrate and draw

3. Applying

1) How can a student apply the command "Read in the name of your Lord" in daily life?
2) What practical steps can you take to use knowledge in a way that pleases Allah?
3) How can remembering our humble creation help us remain humble?
4) How can a believer avoid becoming arrogant when successful?
5) How can the message about the pen encourage us to value education?
6) In what situations today might people try to prevent others from worshipping Allah?
7) How can a Muslim respond wisely when facing opposition to their faith?

4. Analyzing

1) How does the surah connect the themes of creation, knowledge, and worship?
2) Compare the attitude of the believer who prostrates with the attitude of the arrogant person described in the surah.
3) Why do you think the first revelation focused on learning before mentioning many other religious obligations?
4) How does the structure of the surah move from mercy and teaching to warning and accountability?
5) Analyze the reasons why knowledge can either lead a person closer to Allah or further away from Him.
6) How does the story of the one who prevents prayer reveal the conflict between

BACK

5. Evaluating

1) Why is seeking knowledge one of the most important duties of a Muslim?
2) Which lesson of Surah Al-'Alaq do you think is most important for modern society? Why?
3) Do you think wealth and success always lead to arrogance? Explain your answer using the surah.
4) Why is humility an essential quality for those who possess knowledge?
5) How effective is the surah in showing the consequences of pride and rebellion against Allah?
6) Which is more dangerous: ignorance or arrogance? Support your answer with evidence from the surah.

6. Creating (Higher-Order Thinking)

1) Create a mind map showing the main themes of Surah Al-'Alaq.
2) Write a short speech explaining the importance of knowledge based on this surah.
3) Design a classroom poster illustrating the relationship between reading, learning, and worship.
4) Write a reflection describing how the first revelation changed the course of human history.
5) Create a modern-day scenario that demonstrates the lesson of avoiding arrogance.
6) Develop a list of personal goals inspired by the teachings of Surah Al-'Alaq.
7) Compose a short paragraph

Higher-Order Reflection Questions

1) Why do you think the first revelation combined both intellectual growth ("Read") and spiritual growth ("Prostrate")?
2) How would society change if people truly followed the teachings of Surah Al-'Alaq regarding knowledge and humility?
3) What dangers arise when knowledge is separated from faith and accountability to Allah?
4) How does Surah Al-'Alaq define true greatness in contrast to worldly greatness?
5) In what ways does this surah continue to guide

و الحمد لله رب العالمين